

SUFFOLK-NANSEMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1255

Suffolk, Virginia 23434

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The annual dinner meeting of the Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society will be held September 24, 1968, at 8:00 P. M., at the Hotel Suffolk. An effort has been made to contact every member. If you have not been reached, please call Mrs. J. R. Neal, phone 539-5272 and give your name and what you would prefer -- Chicken Dinner, \$2.00 or Roast Beef Dinner, \$2.15.

The program for this meeting will be a slide illustrated lecture on the old homes and sites on Main Street. The slides correspond with pictures and descriptions in the brochure which has been prepared by the Old Homes and Sites Committee. The brochure will be distributed to members and guest at this time. There will also be a display of enlarged photographs of the sites in the brochure. Please plan to attend.

Fall Meeting The Virginia History Federation will have its fall meeting at Hollins College, Roanoke, Virginia, on October 19, 1968. The federation hopes to initiate at an early date a comprehensive study of the resources, needs and potential for full development of Virginia's history. This project will be co-ordinated with the new Virginia Commission of the Arts and Humanities, which has just been appointed. One purpose of the federation is to provide communication and co-ordinate efforts among all history-oriented organizations and individuals in the state.

You can find time to do what you want to - Did you know that one of the members of the historical society swept the sidewalk on Main Street so that a picture of the brick work could be taken? Did you know that one of the members of the historical society gave a week of their vacation to go to Durham, N. C., to go through the Kilby papers at Duke University? Did you know that one of the members of the historical society took part of their annual leave to take pictures for the society? What have you done for your society?

We would like to thank Mrs. Ralph E. Murphy, daughter of Mrs. Telza Smith Miller, for permission to use the following information.  
From the Petersburg Index-Appeal, 1863



## "INTERESTING REMINISCENCES OF LONGSTREET'S SIEGE OF SUFFOLK"

BY  
J.A.T.

We think it may be truly said that one of the most distressing scenes of the whole war occurred near the town of Suffolk, Virginia, in the month of April, 1863, while Gen. Longstreet was infesting that town.

On the memorable day in question heavy skirmishing was going on in the fields surrounding the home of Mr. George Robinson Smith, near Suffolk, and hard fighting continued on either side of the buildings. The family, being taken by surprise, all remained in the house - father, mother and seven children. The oldest son, William Robinson Smith, was serving as a gallant soldier in the 16th Virginia Infantry elsewhere.

Let us look in upon that family. We first see them seek shelter in the cellar; but, presently, a shell burst through the house over their heads, scattering the splinters in every direction. At length, they seek safety by running toward the woods across the carefully tilled fields, amidst the whistling bullets and the terrifying roar of cannon. Alas! When almost at the haven of safety, see the devoted wife with an infant child in her arms (little Martha, or Mattie, as they called her), tumbling headlong beneath the fatal ball. See her bleeding and dying, struck down in all the vigor and strength of health and beauty, for she was a lovely woman. The fight still rages! See those seven helpless children scattering like a brood of partridges, each in wild despair flying to the woods, dodging hither and thither, as the poor sparrow would fly from the eagle's talons. See their home bursting into flames and within a few short hours every vestige of the estate swept from existence! See those motherless children, one an infant, reduced from plenty and comfort to a most unhappy state but for the timely rescue of kind relatives and friends.

See the devoted husband, taking the lifeless form of his wife and taking it to Suffolk to the home of her brother for burial. As he passes down the street with his wife's body, a number of gentlemen are standing in line, preparatory to being marched to Norfolk, and prisoners! Suffolk citizens! Southerners!!! Among them is the Hon. John R. Kilby, brother of this noble dead woman.

In contemplating these distressing scenes, the heart sickens over the fate of cruel war. But the scene does not close here. On the same day, the mother of this dear woman, a widow living three miles from Suffolk, Mrs. Martha Glazebrook Kilby, was also burned out, the fire destroying nearly all of her effects. She, in most intense excitement, had to fly to Suffolk for safety. Knowing nothing of the fate of her daughter, Mrs. Smith, she reached the home of her son, the Hon. John R. Kilby, where the body lay, and seeing her upon the bier, exclaimed, "Is she sick, or has she fainted?" No one had the heart to answer her question, so, upon raising the cloth, she discovered the dreadful fact that her beloved daughter was dead. The aged mother was wild with grief, but through the strength of her Christian virtues, she survived the dreadful shock. Mrs. Smith was one of the best of women; as a wife, mother, friend, without a fault. All knew her but to love her.